

# Nobody should be lonely

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*Veni, vidi, peridi.*

The battle was over quickly. Player A, the winner, was a 30-year-old(-ish) flight attendant Barbara with an alarming amount of gel in her hair and a bright shade of lipstick. Player B, the unlucky one, was 80-year-old Pepa, who now sat defeated in his middle seat. The space on his right was empty yet he did not move. Frankly, it seemed rather rude to the guy on his left.

Before it all happened, the crackling microphone announced:

*"Ladies and gentlemen! In the name of our crew, allow me to welcome you on board. My name is Barbara and I will be your flight attendant for this journey. Please store your luggage in the overhead lockers or under your seat. I would like to remind you that smoking is strictly prohibited on this aircraft. Please pay close attention to the safety instructions. I wish you a pleasant flight."*

It was at this moment that Pepa felt the sudden urge to use the restroom (anyone who is over 70 will understand this, no doubt). His neighbour was busy with his laptop and gigantic headphones. He was not pleased at all to be interrupted; frowned to let Pepa know. This is when Barbara entered the scene.

*"Sir, you have to sit down, we are ready for take-off."*

*"Pepa. Těší mě."*, he said; smiling and ready to shake her hand.

*"Sir, you really must sit down."*

Pepa had no clue what was going on of course. He tried to get pass the attendant but she, rather aggressively I might add, pushed him back into his seat. The plane took off.

He sat, contemplating how to get to the bathroom. It was getting quite urgent but Barbara seemed too scary to take the risk. Earlier at the airport, he had to wait for two hours because of a delay and dared not to leave his seat at the gate. Apparently, a SMS was sent to every passenger, warning about the delay. He received no such message. He did own a phone but rarely turned it on. It beeped and made noise and was useless, he would often say.

8F, the sad empty seat, was meant for his niece. Who, miraculously, got sick just the day before. Her boyfriend was in town.

After an hour of flight, he got up again, determined to stand his ground this time. Headphones was nearly furious (clearly the computer smashing was *very* important). Nobody stopped him this time; Pepa returned to his seat satisfied. But he started to regret leaving his sudoku in the overhead locker. He tried looking around;

with no result. Everyone was either sleeping or hungrily staring at their smartphones, laptops, tablets; you name it. He wished Kačenka (the incriminated niece) was here.

Luckily, he did get back at Barbara for being so rude. When they finally landed and everyone hurtled out, he looked her straight in the eye and did not say goodbye. Quite a harsh one but she deserved it.

He walked out smiling.

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The war continued at the *Grand Balcon* hotel. After an eternity of gesticulation and waving hands, Pepa wrote down his name on a piece of paper. But voilà, the reservation was cancelled. An email was sent a few days ago. Apparently.

Pepa felt very tired. He had no intention of leaving the hotel. It was way too cold to sleep outside. He sat down and took out his snack. The receptionists called security.

The security guy put on his serious and scary face; with every intention to throw this whoever-it-was out. But when he saw an old man, with his deplorable colourful sweater and sandals filled to the brim with Czech spirit (read as socks); he simply did not have the heart. He took him into the security room. It showcased a desk, a run-down kettle and a wanna-be sofa. It consisted of two ancient car seats covered with a blanket, which almost hid their true identity. Pepa more than happily accepted his new home and immediately sat down; smiling politely.

Luckily, days move fast; as do part-time receptionists. Pepa's entrance was soon forgotten. By the third day he almost became part of the staff. Waking up religiously at 5:30 am everyday (once again something for the elderly audience to understand), he helped in the kitchen. Prepared cutlery, brought out all the foods... He almost did a better job than those who were actually paid.

Every day, after everything was set, he peacefully took his breakfast. Then unfolded a napkin and picked a selection of items on display to be entombed in his white blanket. The buffet was not very much to his liking however. He would have preferred a good old Šumava (or Dřevorubák at least), with some godheim or eidam (wouldn't even have to be 30%). Instead though, he was greeted with endless baguettes, an array of cheeses bleu-bleu and blah-blah, and apple-covered containers (who knows what *those* hid).

At 7:00 am, religiously, he went out to explore the city. It was beautiful, no doubt, but wasn't home. Mainly there was no one to talk to. Nobody understood him and he understood nobody. He only saw delegations of hunchbacks staring into the abyss of their screens; or ducks fencing with their selfie sticks.

After a shop marathon, he finally bought a postcard without any presque nude “babes in bikinis” and addressed it home. Kačenka would later on display it on her fridge to please him.

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### *Last breakfast*

He sat alone, talking to himself and letting time stroll by. He then noticed a princess girl clutching a plush toy and looking very worried. She kept glancing back at her parents, who were busy hypnotizing their smartphones. Her food decided to kamikaze as she tried to reach for yet another croissant (be sure to read as **kwa** son). Pepa kneeled down (slowly) and cleaned the mess, assuring the girl nothing happened and cleaning her dress with a napkin. She responded with a sentence or two and so they commenced a conversation. Each speaking confidently despite having no clue what the other one was saying. He took her to the kitchen to wash her hands and show her around and she happily followed him. He told her about his niece and how he felt alone right now. She spoke about – well, who knows what. But both were content to be talking.

They got back and Pepa bent down (with some effort) to give her the desired croissant. She smiled at him and twirled from side to side. Still nibbling on her treat, she kissed her hand and smacked it onto his lips.

“Pervert!”

It was at this moment the mother looked up. She picked up the girl angrily, the croissant still in her mouth and the toy still under her arm; and stormed out. Pepa waved at her; smiling. He made a friend.